

Hawaii

HAWAII has always been the perfect vacation destination — wonderful scenery, great weather, friendly people and an abundance of laid-back tropical charm. And when it comes to welcoming military travelers, few places are as gracious as America's 50th state.

The best news is that a Hawaii vacation doesn't have to cost an arm and a leg. By taking advantage of the accommodations and services offered on three of the islands to service

members and other authorized users, the savvy traveler's time in paradise can be both delightful and affordable.

Because there are far more things to see and do in Hawaii than we can possibly list here, prospective visitors should visit the official Army morale, welfare and recreation site for help in planning their itineraries. The cost of lodging is usually the biggest expense on any vacation, but affordable accommodations are available to qualified military-affiliated visitors to Oahu, Kauai and the Big Island of Hawaii. For specifics on guest eligibility, reservation policies and the best

Guests at the full-service yet affordable Hale Koa military resort on Oahu are just steps away from famed Waikiki Beach.

on a Budget

Story and Photos by Steve Harding

times to visit, check each facility's Web site.

Oahu

Though not the largest of the Hawaiian Islands, Oahu is in many ways the best known. Home of bustling Honolulu, the state capital, and Hawaii's main international airport, Oahu is a fascinating blend of big-city glitter and small-town friendliness. From famed Waikiki Beach to Pearl Harbor to the huge North Shore surf, Oahu is Hawaii's hub. It is a wonderful destination in itself, as well as a convenient jump-

ing-off point for travel to the other islands.

Oahu also offers the largest variety of military vacation accommodations in Hawaii. These include the Hale Koa Hotel on Waikiki, the Waianae Army Recreation Center, and facilities at Bellows Air Force Station and the Marine Corps base at Kaneohe Bay.

The Hale Koa is perhaps the best known of Oahu's military resorts. Located on 75 acres of prime Waikiki beachfront at Fort DeRussy, the resort hotel boasts 817 rooms, a range of restaurants and snack bars, fitness

center, post exchange, gift shops and its own beach. The Hale Koa offers several categories of rooms, from standard to deluxe oceanfront, and rates range from \$67 to \$174 per night, double occupancy, based on rank and room category.

If you're looking for something a bit further from the bright lights of Honolulu, try the cabins and campsites at Bellows AFS. Located on Oahu's southeastern shore just south of Kaneohe Bay, the facility offers three levels of beach cabins ranging from \$55 to \$65 per night, depending on

Web sites to visit

Army MWR

www.armymwr.com/portal/travel/paths/hi.asp

The Hale Koa

www.halekoa.com

Bellows Air Force Station

www.bellowsafs.com

Marine Corps' Kaneohe Bay

www.mccshawaii.com/cottages.htm

Waianae Army Recreation Center

www.mwrarmyhawaii.com/lodging/waianaelg.asp?id=20

Barking Sands Pacific Missile Range

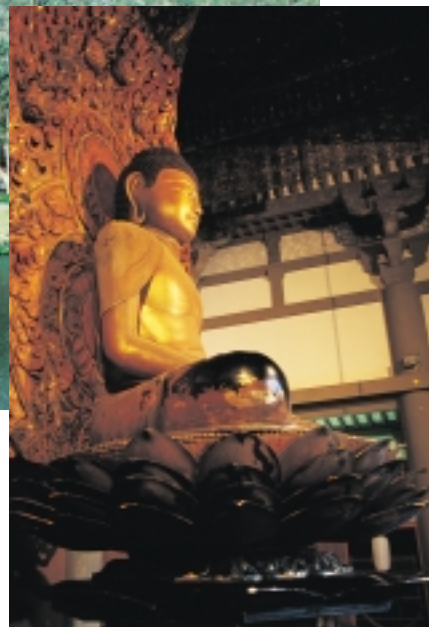
www.pmr.f.navy.mil/mwr-cot1.html

Kilauea Military Camp

www.kmc-volcano.com



Among the many fascinating — and free — sites on Oahu is the Byodo-In Buddhist temple near Kaneohe (above). A replica of a 900-year-old temple in Uji, Japan, the shrine houses the magnificent, nine-foot-tall Lotus Buddha.



amenities and location. Camping is an option on both family and group sites.

Beach cottages are also available on Oahu's northeastern coast, at the Marine Corps' Kaneohe Bay facility. Formally known as Marine Corps Base, Hawaii, the installation offers two-bedroom cottages at \$75 to \$80 per night, depending on location. MCBH is also home to the Lodge at Kaneohe Bay, which offers 74

kitchenette-equipped rooms, a picnic area and easy access to the base's exchange and other retail outlets. The room rate is \$75 per night, which includes a complimentary continental breakfast.

Perhaps the best beach facility on Oahu, the Waianae Army Recreation Center, is just 35 miles from Waikiki on the island's western, or leeward, coast. WARC offers 39 air-conditioned

beachfront cabins, all with ceiling fans, cable TV, telephone, full kitchens, private sundecks and barbecue grills. Rates range from \$45 to \$95 per night, depending on rank, and reservations may be made up to a year in advance.

Getting to Paradise

ONE of the biggest expenses of a Hawaiian vacation has always been getting there. Unless you're independently wealthy, an ocean voyage is probably out of the question. And if you're not visiting the islands on temporary duty or for other official reasons, you're left with having to find your own way there.

The bad news is that commercial flights to Hawaii from the U.S. mainland tend to be expensive, especially during the peak travel season. But the good news is that there are almost as many less-expensive ways to get to Hawaii as there are affordable places to stay once you arrive.

The first option for authorized users is space-available travel on U.S.

military aircraft. Air Force Air Mobility Command transports regularly fly to Hawaii from bases in the continental United States, Asia and even from Europe, and there are also occasional flights operated by the other military services. Two excellent unofficial resources for in-depth information on all-service Space-A routes, schedules and eligibility are www.glue.umd.edu/~oard/spacea/ and <http://spacea.info>.

The second option is to take a scheduled commercial flight. Hawaii is served by several of the major carriers, most of which charge hefty fares for in-season travel. Sites such as Travelocity (www.travelocity.com) and Expedia (www.expedia.com) can help you compare schedules and prices. Airlines sometimes offer

special rates that are available only through their own Web sites, so you might also want to check the individual carrier sites.

The third option for air travel to Hawaii is to take a charter flight or package tour. While Travelocity, Expedia and similar sites carry useful information, perhaps the best source for Army travelers is the Army MWR site at www.armymwr.com/portal/travel/travelresources. The site highlights special tours, package deals and reduced-cost travel options open only to military members and other authorized patrons.

Finding a flight to Hawaii at the right price might take a bit of research, but the result — a vacation in paradise at a reasonable cost — is definitely worth the effort. — *Steve Harding*

Kauai

Known as the “Garden Isle,” Kauai lies about 75 miles northwest of Oahu. Renowned for its pristine beaches and ruggedly beautiful terrain, the island is a sports paradise. The surfing, diving, snorkeling, kayaking, rafting and golfing are all world-class, and a visit to the famed Waimea Canyon is guaranteed to awe even the most jaded traveler. Though shopping and nightlife options aren’t as extensive as on Oahu, Kauai does have some excellent and very affordable shops and restaurants.

For military visitors, the best lodging option on Kauai is definitely the 12 beachfront cottages at the Navy’s Barking Sands Pacific Missile Range Facility. Each two-bedroom cottage has a kitchen, cable TV, washer and dryer, microwave and outdoor grill. The rate is \$55 per night, double occupancy, and \$5 per night for each additional guest. The PMRF’s morale, welfare and recreation office can also help visitors arrange island

tours, adventure treks, river cruises and a wide range of other activities.

The Big Island

For those looking for scenery even more dramatic than that found on Kauai, the island of Hawaii is the place to go. Known as the Big Island, it is just that — twice as large as all the other Hawaiian Islands combined. And it’s getting bigger all the time, thanks to the lava flowing from Kilauea, the world’s most active volcano.

While Kilauea and Mauna Loa, her larger though inactive sister, dominate the skyline, the Big Island offers a range of other sights. Soaring water falls, black-sand beaches, historic Hawaiian temples and acres of Kona coffee trees all catch the eye, and a wide range of outdoor activities offer something for everyone.

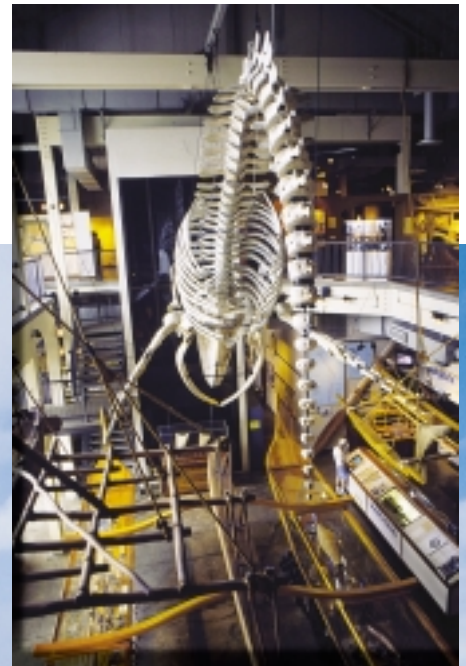
It’s only fitting that a place as exotic as the Big Island should offer accommodations that are beyond the ordinary — and that’s just what authorized travelers will find at

Kilauea Military Camp . Located within Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, the joint forces recreation center has a 110-bed dormitory, cottages and apartments, with rates ranging from \$15 to \$101 per night, depending on the accommodation and guest’s rank.

An Affordable Paradise

Hawaii has always welcomed military travelers, and you will be greeted with a smile. With a little planning, and by making use of all the discounts and special facilities open to authorized users, your vacation in paradise will leave you smiling, too. □

Aloha!



Whether it’s lazing on the beach, getting a close-up view of the islands’ history at the Hawaii Maritime Center (above) or enjoying the view from atop a shrine-capped hill (main photo), Hawaii has something to entice every visitor.